

**Harvard Allston Task Force**  
Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 29, 2006  
Honan-Allston Library  
6:30 p.m.

**I. Attendance:**

**Harvard Allston Task Force**

Paul Berkeley  
Mary Helen Black  
John Bruno  
John Cusack  
Rita DiGesse  
Michael Hanlon  
Millie Hollum McLaughlin  
Bruce Houghton  
Brighton Lew  
Harry Mattison  
Ray Mellone  
Tim Norton

**Boston Redevelopment Authority**

Gerald Autler  
Linda Kowalcky

**Harvard University**

John Audi  
Harris Band  
Jim Barrows  
Gary Hammer  
Kevin McCluskey  
Dan Rabinovitz  
Alison Reinhardt  
Kathy Spiegelman

**II. Minutes**

Gerald Autler called the meeting to order at approximately 6:35 p.m. and circulated the meeting minutes from the March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting. In response to the Task Force's desire to participate more directly in the development of the meeting agendas, Gerald proposed that the structure of the agenda be divided into thirds to allow the BRA, Harvard, and the Task Force time to discuss particular items. While the agenda will be divided into thirds, the amount of time allotted for each component may vary from meeting to meeting according to what needs to be discussed.

Gerald passed out the agenda for the meeting and a summary provided by Harvard of what they intend to discuss for the next two meetings in April. Harvard's portion of the agenda for the April 10<sup>th</sup> meeting will be focused around the "District Vision" and the April 26<sup>th</sup> meeting will focus on the science building.

Gerald announced that the BRA will be hiring a staff member devoted full-time to Allston-Brighton to help inform the planning process. He suggested that there would be overlap between what falls under the Allston-Brighton planning initiative and what the Task Force is doing. Paul Berkeley asked for clarification whether this was a program that the BRA was putting forward or whether it was just a staff position to oversee Allston-Brighton. Gerald said that he doesn't have all of the information yet and none of the details have been finalized but the implementation plan for North Allston would be dealt with by the Task Force and the staff member at the BRA would be looking at the broader Allston-Brighton neighborhood. Ray said the Task Force should know exactly what this person will be doing and expressed a desire for the Task Force to see the job description and have the person come to one of the Task Force meetings. Gerald said that the Task Force has a clearly defined role to review Harvard's Institutional Master Plan (IMP) and that there would be a broader community process for the entire Allston-Brighton neighborhood, but he acknowledged there will be overlapping issues between the two. Ray thought this should be discussed further.

Gerald went through the BRA's scope of neighborhood planning and implementation issues that need to be discussed throughout this process: existing conditions; open space; public realm; Allston square, Brighton Mills, and Western Avenue; jobs and economic development; housing; sustainability; and transportation.

The meeting was turned over to Kathy Spiegelman. Kathy announced that Harvard's master planning consultant Cooper, Robertson and Partners has restarted work after bring on hold over the spring and summer of 2005 to allow Harvard to engage the community and University in a consultation process. Kathy announced that Stefan Behnisch, the architect for Harvard's first science building in Allston, will be attending the April 26<sup>th</sup> Task Force meeting to introduce himself to the Task Force and begin a discussion. Kathy gave a broad overview of the project timeline Harvard is anticipating. She said Harvard hopes to have design guidelines ready for discussion in June. Harvard would like to complete the approvals process for the first science building and arts/culture project within approximately one year, and the IMP approvals for the larger Phase I development plan in slightly more than a year.

Kathy announced that Harvard will be hosting a sustainability conference on April 27<sup>th</sup> through April 29<sup>th</sup> and encouraged Task Force members to try and attend. She said a summary of the conference would be discussed at one of the Task Force meetings following the conference. Kathy said that she previewed the Allston Oral History video that is being funded by Harvard and produced by the Brighton-Allston Historical Society in partnership with the Brighton branch library. Some of the Task Force members are featured in the video and she said Harvard is very proud to be a part of this contribution to the community. She thought that in the near future there would be an official unveiling of the video.

Kathy presented a slide on “Land Use Patterns” for the proposed Allston campus. The graphic depicted the site that was selected for the first science building and demonstrated how that decision in turn informs other decisions about where to locate proposed programmatic activities on the Allston campus. Mike Hanlon inquired whether the height of potential buildings on the Ohiri soccer fields and the area on North Harvard Street would not exceed the height of the Harvard stadium in order to maintain the view of the stadium from certain vantage points. Kathy said that this would be something the Task Force would discuss with Harvard and the City when buildings were proposed and Harvard’s design guidelines were discussed. Kathy turned the meeting over to Harris Band to discuss the open space framework.

Harris explained that the principles of open space are embedded into Harvard’s culture and that the University has a good track record of incorporating open space into its campus planning. Harris discussed two fundamental principles that are considered when designing an open space plan. The first is that the open space plan must form a system that links individual open spaces, and the second is that open space is designed first—buildings don’t define the open space, the open space framework determines the location of the buildings. Harris said that proposed streetscapes should include the following: animation between the buildings and the streetscape; landscaping; generous sidewalks with bike paths and walking paths; and a buffer separating pedestrians from the street. In terms of the big picture, there is an integrated system between the campus, neighborhood and region and all of the development is a product of the open space system.

Ray asked how it is feasible to develop an open space framework when there is not a specific development plan in place. Harris said the open space system has to work in order for the open spaces to be used effectively, and that sequencing the various stages of development plays an important role. Because of this there will be stages when the open space system isn’t fully utilized. Ray asked how an efficient open space plan can be developed first if Charlesview hasn’t agreed to move yet. He thought that if the open space plan is designed with the assumption that Charlesview will move, and Charlesview ends up staying in its current location, then the open space plan may not work. Gerald told the Task Force that he has set up meetings with the Parks Department staff and the Parks Commissioner to draw upon their knowledge for planning the open space.

Harry asked for clarification as to why the open space presentation was being made to the Task Force and what the Task Force was expected to do with the information. He said it seems to be a very specific plan from Harvard and was unclear as to who gets to weigh-in on the plan and when the Task Force would be able to have a discussion about the plan.

Bruce commented that it’s good that Harvard is thinking about the open space framework on its campus, but that the community won’t necessarily use the campus open space and there aren’t really destinations within the campus where the neighbors would go. He suggested that Harvard look at what open spaces the community uses and perhaps what trade-offs could be proposed. John Cusack said that he liked the canal aspect of Harvard’s plan because it does provide a destination for the neighbors and invites them into the open space area.

Pallavi Mande, an audience member and a representative of the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA), said that the CRWA has done studies looking at the hydrology of the land and has shared this information with Harvard. She hopes that the University takes this information into consideration when formulating its plans. Pallavi said that the Task Force comments are really critical and they mirror what the CRWA is voicing in terms of hydrology principles and access to the river.

John Bruno thought that for every new building that Harvard develops, there should be a specified amount of open space provided. Gerald pointed out that there is a significant difference between campus and neighborhood open spaces. He said that it's important for the BRA and the community to identify the gaps between the existing open space available in the neighborhood and how much additional open space will be needed. He said that the Task Force should establish a goal for how much and what kind of open space they would like to have. John B. said that the community has a unique opportunity to achieve what they want, and that they should look at the bigger picture. He said it may require sacrificing in some areas to get what they want in other areas.

Kathy explained that the reason the open space plan was being presented at the meeting is that Harvard will have to include this information as part of its Institutional Master Plan. Kathy explained that once the Institutional Master Plan Notification Form (IMP NF) is filed with the BRA, there is a scoping process with the BRA and the Task Force will have an opportunity to provide input. Gerald said that Harvard has not yet filed the IMP NF, and that this initial filing is the action that begins the scoping process. He said that Task Force members should know that the review process is not limited to the Task Force meetings and Task Force members can always contact him with comments and suggestions. It is the job of the BRA to synthesize the Task Force's comments and pass them along to Harvard. Ray suggested that as an agenda item Gerald should give members of the Task Force a summary of the IMP process and how it works. Gerald agreed and said that neither Harvard nor the BRA have never undertaken an IMP review process as extensive and complex as Harvard's Allston development.

John Bruno said that the neighborhood is in a unique position to advocate for changes to Western Ave. and that the framework should begin with changes to Western Ave. Mary Helen said that one of the primary open spaces in the neighborhood is Smith Field, and that there is very limited safe access to the park for the majority of the residents.

Bruce requested that handouts of the presentation slides be provided to the Task Force so members can review the materials after the meeting. Kathy said that this would be feasible and that Harvard could also post some of the presentation materials on its web site.

The Task Force members expressed a desire for Harvard to look further down Western Ave. and beyond (west of) Barry's Corner when thinking about transportation and open space frameworks. Kathy agreed but said that she didn't think Harvard's Institutional Master Plan would include much of the area west of Barry's Corner because the University is not proposing institutional projects for that land as part of the first phase of development.

Ray questioned whether the BRA and Harvard were placing enough confidence in the Task Force. He stressed that the Task Force should be the primary review group for proposals for the neighborhood and that the Task Force should be heavily involved in the implementation process. While Gerald agreed, he also stated that the Task Force is focused on Harvard's IMP and the North Allston area, and would not be the primary community review group for the entire Allston-Brighton neighborhood--for example, the Cleveland Circle area. Development in areas outside of Harvard's IMP area and outside of North Allston should involve a broader community review process that may or may not include the Task Force, depending on the specific project. Ray disagreed with Gerald and thought it should be clear that the Task Force would play a role.

Bruce said that while the community should come up with ideas for what kinds of community benefits it would like, it's hard to conceptualize what Harvard may be able to contribute. Bruce challenged Harvard and the BRA to use Allston as an opportunity to do something that has never been done before, such as trying to achieve something like the "model city" program. Kevin stated that while Harvard is not yet at this point in its planning process, the University is committed to continuing the dialogue with the community.

John Bruno made a motion to approve the minutes from the March 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, Brighton Lew seconded the motion and the Task Force approved the minutes.

The meeting adjourned at 8:45 p.m.